

## Paraphrasing [Fact sheet]

Both paraphrasing and summarising are essential writing skills for university study. Improving these writing skills will help you to:

- Say what you want to say in more than one way
- Develop your own writing style
- Integrate sources into your writing
- Avoid plagiarism
- Increase your confidence

### What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is a writing skill in which you rephrase, re-write or and re-structure previously published information in different words, without changing or adding to its original meaning. In other words, a **paraphrase** says the same thing as an original text but in a different way with different words. Normally, you would paraphrase only short sections such as sentences, a series of sentences or a paragraph. It should be clear to the reader that you have paraphrased someone else's work. You can do this by writing the source or author at or near the beginning of the paraphrase.

### 1. Why paraphrase?

Sometimes you need to say something in a different way in order to make someone else understand. At other times, especially in academic writing, you need to put something in your own words in order to demonstrate that you understand it. In addition, it is not acceptable to use other people's words without putting them in quotation marks "like this" or 'like this'. It is not a good idea to have an essay full of quotations because too many direct quotations can make an essay tedious and lacking in variety for the reader.

### 2. How do I go about paraphrasing?

#### Useful strategy one

You can substitute words with similar meanings (or synonyms) for some of the words in the original. However, take care not to substitute words mechanically, without paying attention to the overall meaning of a phrase or sentence. This can lead to lack of clarity. Dictionaries and thesauruses can help with finding appropriate synonyms.

#### Useful strategy two

Another strategy for approaching paraphrasing is to make the first word of the paraphrase different from the original.

#### **Here are some examples:**

According to Smith (1999), **social anthropology and psychology** have a number of similarities.

- (1) *Several similarities exist between **social anthropology and psychology**, states Smith (1999).*
- (2) *Smith (1999) notes that if **social anthropology and psychology** were compared, several similarities would be found.*

## **Useful strategy three**

You can mention the source or author at the beginning or the end of the paraphrased section (see examples above).

## **Useful Strategy four**

You can paraphrase by changing the length of sentences.

(1) By dividing one longer sentence into two or more short ones:

### **Original**

*In the past, council housing was the domain of the 'respectable' working class, while today tenants are fewer and poorer with 1/3 of all council tenants living in 'no-earner' households (Burney 2000).*

### **Paraphrase**

*Burney (2000) observes that during the post war era, social housing was inhabited by the 'respectable' working class. Today, however, there are fewer council tenants, who are also poorer. Over 30% reside in 'no-earner' households.*

(2) By rewriting two shorter sentences into one:

### **Original**

*Mr Hawkins was the sole tenant of a Newham council family home. In 1987 he died, and his wife succeeded to the tenancy (Luba 2005).*

### **Paraphrase**

*Luba (2005) reported that Hawkins had been the tenant of his family home until his death in 1987 when his wife became successor to the tenancy agreement.*

## **References**

Burney, E. (2000) 'Ruling out trouble: anti-social behaviour and housing management.' *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry*. 11 (2) pp.268-273.

Luba, J. (29/04/2005) Tolerated Trespassers: Newham LBC v Hawkins [2005] EWCA Civ 451 *Housing Today* <http://www.housing-today.co.uk/legalindex.asp> [Accessed 26th May, 2005]